

**Lake Michigan Fisheries Team
December 5, 2001**

Draft Notes (prepared by Bill Horns 12/6/01)

These notes summarize all LMFT decisions and recommendations, and are not intended as a summary of all discussions.

Present: Dave Weber, Brad Eggold, Justine Hasz, Pradeep Hirethota, Matt Coffaro, Al Kaas, Sue Marcquenski, Dick Rebicek, Steve Fajfer, Steve Hogler, Mike Toneys, Joe Golbach, Terry Lychwick, George Boronow, Randy Link, Mark Opgenorth, Lee Meyers, Charlie Verhoeven, Fred Binkowski, John Janssen.

Next meeting: January 3-4, 2002, in Sturgeon Bay

Revised timetable for LMIFMP

Background (from agenda). Completion of the updated Lake Michigan Integrated Fisheries Management Plan has been delayed for various reasons. Time has come to finish it up. I have proposed a revised timetable for discussion and approval, along with a draft discussion draft outline of a new Plan. It calls for the LMFT to complete a draft Plan for public discussion by the end of February.

Action. The LMFT approved the proposed revised timetable. The next step in the planning process will be a two-day LMFT drafting session, January 3-4, 2002.

Zone 3 whitefish trap net season

Background (from agenda). Commercial whitefish trap netters in Zone 3 are continuing to appeal to the Department to extend the summer season. We had hoped that the Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum would be able to help us find a broadly acceptable solution to this issue, but it now is pretty clear that the Forum, despite the efforts of Mel Both and others, will not be able to do that. If anything, people are more dug in than ever. The issue will not go away, and commercial fishers have got the attention of Darrell Bazzell and other administrators, who expect us to address the issue. Tom Hansen has circulated an e-mail suggesting that we consider recommending a rule change so that the issue can be considered in public hearings. I would like the LMFT to advance a strategy for resolving the issue. This does not mean that a rule change is necessary, but if we want to stick with the status quo we need to find a way to make Administrators and NRB members comfortable that that is the correct response. If a rule change is appropriate, we need to spell that out.

Action. The LMFT developed an outline for a rule change that attempts to extend the summer trap net season in Zone 3, while also addressing the safety concerns that have been raised by Northeast Wisconsin Great Lakes Sport Fishermen and the WF/GLSFC. The proposed rule has the following elements: 1) Make the trap net season in Zone 3 the same as in Zone 2. 2) Require adequate [to be defined] marking of all trap nets and gill nets in all waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay. 3) Prohibit

suspended trap nets or suspended gill nets near [distance to be specified] the surface in all waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay. This proposal is not an LMFT recommendation until and unless ratified by the Team at a subsequent meeting. The Team understands that if such a rule were advanced, it would be highly controversial.

Whitefish bag limits

Background (from agenda). One of the rules that will go to spring hearings would change the sport fishing bag limit for whitefish and lake herring on Lake Superior. We have been asked to comment on whether the rule change should also be extended to Lake Michigan and Green Bay. Presently, the sport bag limit for whitefish is 25 pounds plus one fish. There is no sport fishing limit for lake herring. Under the proposed change for Lake Superior, there would be a combined daily bag limit of 10 whitefish, lake herring, and hybrids.

Action. The LMFT recommended extending the rule change to include Lake Michigan and Green Bay.

Stocking distribution of yearling Skamania in 2002.

Background (from agenda). It has been suggested that because we will be far short of our Skamania stocking quota this spring, we should stock all of them (approx 60,000) in the Root River, to maximize the number of returning Skamanias that will be available for future propagation.

Action. The LMFT recommends stocking 40K in the Root, with the balance going to the Kewaunee.

Hansen proposal regarding updating the statutes to establish restitution values for non-game fish species.

Background (from agenda). Tom Hansen has circulated a proposal to add non-game species to the statutorily defined list of species for which the state may recover damages from individuals acting in violation of the law. I have circulated his proposal by e-mail

Action. The LMFT supports the proposal.

Fish health and fish production issues.

Background. The team discussed several topics related to fish health and fish production. Sue Marcquenski recommended the following: “If a lot of fish experiences a contagious disease outbreak including active mortality in a hatchery at any time preceding stocking, every effort will be made to avoid stocking those fish into a brood stream.” During the discussion, plans for 120,000 coho now at Bayfield and slated for stocking in Kewaunee County were mentioned. Larry Nelson has asked whether those could be stocked now to save rearing costs.

Actions. 1) The LMFT supports Sue’s proposal. 2) Al Kaas agreed to let the Team know what is up with the 120K coho.

Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum.

Background (from agenda). Review Forum discussions. In particular I would like to touch on 1) the upcoming workshops, 2) the role of the Forum in updating the LMIFMP, and 3) concerns of the Federation and the Great Lakes Study Committee regarding the Forum.

Sport fishing rule changes.

Background (from agenda). The statewide package of rule changes to be presented at the spring hearings includes two related to Lake Michigan Green Bay: 1) an increase in the minimum length for musky from Green Bay (from 40" to 50") and 2) a change in the closed season for yellow perch in Lake Michigan and tributaries (from a June 1-30 to May 1-June 15).

Action. The LMFT recommends advancing the yellow perch rule by emergency order, for adoption by the NRB in February.

Resolutions passed by WF/GLSFC.

Background (from agenda). The Wisconsin Federation of Great Lakes Sport Fishing Clubs has adopted the following resolutions (paraphrased). 1) Oppose any expansion of the whitefish trap net fishery in Zone 3 in the summer months. 2) Oppose the retention by commercial fishers of any incidentally caught lake trout. 3) Oppose trawling for whitefish. 4) Oppose the continued use of sport fishing license fees for commercial fishing management costs. 5) Demand that all commercially caught fish be landed in Wisconsin. 6) Demand that the Green Bay smelt fishery be closed.

Action. I will draft a letter to the Federation from Mike Staggs addressing these concerns.

Management reports.

Background (from agenda). I recently received copies of annual reports on 1) walleye restoration in Milwaukee and 2) smelt trawling. Should we be devoting more time to discussing reports like these as they are completed?

Action. No discussion.

Trap net marking.

Background (from agenda). Sport trollers around Door County have not opposed the proposed changes in trap net rules, but some have raised concerns about making sure that the nets are adequately marked. Is any action, regulation changes or otherwise, needed on the part of the Department?

Action. The issue was discussed in connection with the trap net season discussion.

Spotted musky.

Background (from agenda). Mark Oppenorth requested a discussion of spotted musky management activities this coming spring.

Action. Discussion of plans to obtain fertile eggs from three sources: Long Lake, Fox River, and Lake St. Clair.

Tributary access maps.

Background. Brad Eggold is preparing tributary access maps for posting on the Lake Michigan web page. If you have a tributary for which you want a map posted, provide Brad with information about access sites on that stream.

Steelhead.

Background (from agenda). Can we have an update and discussion about where we are with steelhead, in particular 1) the six action items adopted by the LMFT in July and 2) future rule making. In July, the LMFT recommended the following actions: a) Extend weir operations where possible to collect as many Skamania as possible this fall. b) Attempt to collect additional Skamania eggs by electrofishing the lower Root and Kewaunee Rivers. c) Fin-clip all stocked steelhead in the future. d) Draft a research agenda addressing disease transmission, smolt competition, adult competition, importance of size at stocking, importance of stocking location -- Steve Hogler will take the lead. e) Develop a summary of the problems and opportunities surrounding infusing new genetic diversity into our feral Skamania brood stock by importing genetic material from Indiana or from the West Coast -- John Kubisiak will take the lead. f) Develop a summary of the problems and opportunities surrounding initiating a new steelhead strain -- Steve Hogler will take the lead. We also discussed possible rule changes, including protecting migrating steelhead in the lower Root and Kewaunee Rivers and lowering the steelhead bag limit in all Wisconsin waters. The LMFT recommended taking the issue of rule changes to the LMFF and the WF/GLSFC, without a specific recommendation.

Actions. 1) John Kubisiak will develop a recommendation for spawning of skamania now being held, after consulting with Kim Scribner and possibly others. 2) Randy Link will request that Indiana hold a surplus male Skamania's. 3) The LMFT recommended pursuing Kamloops eggs from Minnesota and that, if the eggs are obtained this fall, they would be replace the so-called "conditional brook trout" now slated for stocking in spring of 2003.

Cormorants.

Background (from agenda). The USFWS has completed a draft of an EIS on management of cormorants. The draft can be found at <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/issues/cormorant/deis/deis.html>.

The public comment period runs until January 15. A small Department Team (Paul Peeters, Bill Horns, Sumner Matteson, Jeff Pritzl, and Curt Wilson) will meet later in December to discuss what the Department response should be.

Action. Discussion only.

Chinook and coho salmon production shortfalls.

Background (from agenda). Update on where we are in dealing with projected shortfalls.

Action. Al Kaas reported that the shortfalls were being covered. In the case of the chinooks some production adjustments may fill the gap. If not, we have a request for backup on file with Michigan. In the case of the cohos, we have sufficient fish in production, thanks in part to help from Michigan.

Lakewide link

Background (from agenda). Steve Fajfer has suggested a discussion of the possible roles of lakewide factors that govern the survival of stocked fish of all species. There has been some e-mail discussion of this already.

Action. Discussion only.